

18 June 2026

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to confirm that The Open University has formally signed the [UKRI Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice](#).

This voluntary agreement reflects our commitment to responsible research and innovation, and to embedding environmental sustainability across the University. It is closely aligned with our emerging strategy, which renews the OU's founding purpose while setting out how we will deliver education and research that create public value across all four nations and beyond.

The Concordat supports our ambition to be a transformative university for the 21st century: widening opportunity, strengthening society and translating knowledge into real-world impact. It also reinforces our commitment to focus our teaching, research and partnerships where they can deliver the greatest benefit for society, communities, partners and the environment.

- Sustainability is central to this ambition. Through our institutional commitments, we will: [Achieve 'net zero'](#) greenhouse gas emissions from our energy use in the 2030s (currently approximately 5,000 CO<sub>2</sub>T) and from all other indirect emissions (Scope 3) no later than 2050 (estimated to be approximately 100,000 CO<sub>2</sub>T).
- [Embed sustainability](#) across the formal, informal and subliminal curriculum, collaborating across our academic and research teams to create and deliver sustainability-related activities.

- [Align our approach](#) to research and education with the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) and the [Inner Development Goals](#), evidencing our commitment to environmental and social sustainability through education, research, enterprise, curriculum and public engagement.
- Promote responsible and sustainable research practice across all disciplines.
- [Report](#) in line with the university and college sector initiatives on Sustainable Development such as the UN Global Compact and nation climate reporting requirements.

By joining this national initiative, we are strengthening our commitment to environmentally responsible decision-making and to fostering a culture in which sustainability is built into how we teach, research, innovate and operate.

OU researchers are already working with partners locally, nationally and globally to address pressing challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, sustainable development, inequality, skills needs and community resilience. The Concordat will help us build on this work by supporting more consistent, open, inclusive and responsible research practice across the institution.

Signing the Concordat also complements existing and developing initiatives, including our sustainable laboratories certification programme, our emerging approach to responsible AI, and our climate-conscious business travel guidance. Together, these activities support our wider aim to reduce our environmental footprint, strengthen sustainable operations and embed environmental responsibility into decision-making. We look forward to working with fellow signatories to advance sustainability in research and innovation, and to ensure that the OU's contribution supports a thriving, fair and environmentally resilient future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P A Phoenix', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Professor David Phoenix  
Vice-Chancellor